(c) The Government of India has initiated schemes to connect villages and to provide better services. Out of a total of 6,07,491 villages in the country, about 4,68,862 villages are already provided village public telephones. New technology like Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) are also being introduced in rural areas. In addition, all exchanges are being connected with reliable media for providing better service.

(d) More than 4 out of 100 people in the country are having telephone (teledensity is around 4.36% as of March 31, 2002). Telecom facilities have been provided to Headquarters of all Revenues Districts, Sub-Divisions, Tehsils and Blocks. STD facility has also been provided to all 594 District Headquarters, 1199 Sub-Divisions (out of 1213), 2883 Tehsil Headquarters (out of 2928), 5945 Block Headquarters (out of 6054). Some very remote areas which require satellite based or other sophisticated telecommunication media have not yet been provided. The ongoing VPT programme proposes to cover all villages including remote locations by December 2002.

Growth in IT Enabled Services

2632. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Information Technology services are set to register growth in the current fiscal year and if so, to what extent;

(b) whether according to NASSCOM there would be a projected shortage of qualified Information Technology professionals in 2004-2005 with demand peaking at 14,08,000 and supply lagging behind at 8,75,000;

(c) whether out of 1.6 lakh engineers who qualify every year in Information Technology field, only less than 2 per cent come from premier Information Technology Institutions; and

(d) if so, whether Government would strengthen the Information

Technology base of Educational Institutions, Polytechnics and ITIs which together turn out the rest?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) Yes, Sir. IT enabled Services are estimated to generate a revenue of Rs. 7100 crore in 2001-02, from Rs. 4100 crore in 2000-01, and continue to maintain a healthy growth rate in the current fiscal year.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Government has initiated several measures to ramp up the skilled IT professionals through measures like setting up IIITs, enhanced intakes at Premier Institutions, up-gradation of Regional Engineering Colleges etc.

Cable theft

†2633. SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that several cases of cable theft come into light day to day;

(b) if so, whether Government are considering to take any concrete steps to check the same; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) to (c) Sir, theft of cables do take place. The vulnerable points usually are where underground cable becomes accessible such as culverts and manholes. Various steps are being taken to check the theft of cable; including laying of cables in pipes on culverts, patrolling of major cable routes and locking of manholes. Reduction of length of underground cables by providing

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.